

Description

Visual displays are an effective way to present information. People learn more from seeing and touching than from listening. Exhibits can be colorful, three-dimensional, hands-on, and interactive. Exhibits can be created for any topic. A simple poster board, a series of panels, a pictorial timeline, models of cleanup technologies, a free-standing booth, or interactive computer games can be an effective exhibit.

Required Activity?

No.

Making it Work

When to Use

An exhibit or information bulletin board is an excellent way to attract a new audience, create an additional presence within a community, and present complex technical information in a simplified manner. An exhibit also can provide additional information during meetings or ***Presentations***, provide a presence at an event when you are not able to attend, and allow you to gather feedback from community members. An exhibit is effective in a variety of settings:

- Educational—used to introduce and explain a topic (maps, posters, interactive games);
- Technology Transfer—used to inform other players in the Superfund decision-making process about technical issues (model of a new remedial technology);
- Accomplishments—used to highlight success stories (awards/certificates, banners, quotes, personal testimony, newspaper articles);
- Historical—used to show progress (timeline with photographs);
- Thematic—used to convey a message, such as a vision statement (a video of a speech);
- Promotional—used to increase public access to EPA services (banners, photographs).

How to Use

To determine whether you have adequate resources to create an exhibit, consider how much development and review time is needed (check with the procurement staff), measure cost, and decide if the exhibit can be reused and how much access the audience will have to the exhibit. You can optimize exhibits and information bulletin boards when you plan to reuse the display or create a portable display for ***Public Meetings*** or ***Public Availabilities***.

The Topic or the Audience

The audience or the topic is usually the starting point for an exhibit. For example, do you need to describe the remedy so that citizens can give their input? In this case, the topic would be the primary focus. Or, do you want to spur membership in a Community Advisory Group? Then pitch to your audience.

The Exhibit Location

No matter who your audience is, the exhibit should be accessible. You may need a display at a conference, home/garden/trade show, on-site at the office, or in your Regional public information center. Consider the number of people, space available, and the level of interaction you



[See Presentations, Tab 29](#)



[See Public Meetings, Tab 32;](#)
[Public Availabilities, Tab 30](#)

Last Updated:
September 2002

Exhibits

[See Internet,
Tab 10](#)



[See Informa-
tion Reposi-
tory, Tab 21](#)



will have with people. If you have an informational exhibit and want to reach a large number of people, investigate displaying it at libraries, science museums, nature centers, boys and girls clubs, and malls. Other good locations are waiting areas at places such as health clinics, motor vehicle departments, hospitals, co-ops, and town halls. Exhibits should be placed in a location that meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Visit the Center for Independence (CFI) **Internet** site: www.gj.net/~cfi/index.htm. The site includes weekly updates and information about making your public space accessible. For a free copy of the ADA Guide for Small Businesses, published by the U.S. Department of Justice, call CFI at (970) 241-0315. There may be some locations where you always want to have an exhibit. The **Information Repository** and the site are good examples. These exhibits should be changed regularly.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Plan ahead and assess resources. Visualize the final display, and share your ideas with other CICs and coworkers who may have experience and examples of exhibits that could give you ideas. They also may offer resources, an important consideration because developing and testing an exhibit can be expensive. In assessing resources, you should ask about volunteer help, access to materials, opportunities to borrow work others have done, and how to keep the exhibit material updated, assuming the exhibit will be reused.

Examples

EXAMPLE 1: PLACEMAT NEWS

One CIC talked to the owner of a popular diner and got permission to print placemats for the tables. The placemats, designed to look like a page out of a newspaper, gave regular updates on progress at the site and advertised upcoming events.

EXAMPLE 2: LIBRARY

Another CIC used a display case in the community library for a permanent exhibit. One of the panels depicted key milestones for Superfund sites. Another panel was updated regularly with information about which milestone the site had reached, the remedy that was being used, and the chemicals that were found. The CIC placed a comment box next to the case for questions and then made another panel to display questions and answers from the comment box.

Tips

- Visit trade shows or other events to get exhibit ideas.
- Identify any special needs your audience may have. Does the exhibit need to be bilingual? Is it accessible to disabled citizens? Is the focus for children; can they read it?
- Keep the display simple and at the level of audience understanding.
- Feature a “Words You Should Understand” piece.
- Include the EPA logo.
- Make attractive, professional, and, if appropriate, interactive exhibits.
- Develop reusable exhibits whenever possible.
- Design exhibits that can stand alone in your absence.

- If the exhibit is not staffed, ensure that people know who to call with questions.
- If the exhibit will be displayed outdoors, ensure that it is sturdy and weatherproof. Also, try to make it as tamper-proof as possible if it will be left unattended.
- Consider providing a means for people to evaluate the exhibit so you can determine how effective it was and what you can do to improve it.
- Avoid designing exhibits that are difficult to transport or assemble.
- Potential exhibit locations include:
 - At or near the site
 - Information repository
 - Regional EPA offices
 - Local government buildings
 - Conventions and conference halls
 - Civic centers
 - Shopping malls
 - Theaters
 - Gyms
 - Youth centers
 - Grocery store entrances/exits
 - Libraries
 - Department of Motor Vehicles
 - Hospital waiting rooms

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Information Repositories, Tab 21](#)
- [Presentations, Tab 29](#)
- [Public Availabilities/Poster Sessions, Tab 30](#)
- [Public Meetings, Tab 32](#)

ATTACHED ITEMS WITHIN THIS TOOL

- Attachment 1: Types of Exhibits—Description of main types of exhibits, their pros and cons, suggested topics that work for each style, and graphical depictions of each.
- Attachment 2: Exhibit Topics and Techniques—Matrix that highlights sample topics and the most appropriate exhibit format for each.

ATTACHMENT 1: Types of Exhibits

Posters—Posters can be small and simple or large and complicated, like the floor displays seen at convention exhibit halls. Posters usually emphasize graphics instead of text. Many posters may be used to form a series that shows the steps in a process. On the other hand, a simple poster may be most effective to announce an event to provide a quick update on site activities.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows viewers to study the information at their own pace• Simple posters can be a very cost-effective method to convey information at numerous locations• Portability and reusability can balance cost of more expensive models• Can reach a large audience if posted in high traffic areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not suitable for all topics• Can be difficult to explain complex or detailed topics because of space and material constraints• If created in-house, can be time-consuming

Computer Displays—These days, taking advantage of computer technology can add an interactive dimension to your exhibit. Using a computer can be as easy as having a laptop at your convention table or as complex as building a computer into a permanent kiosk. Computers attract attention and can expose a large number of people to a large amount of information. For example, computers can provide access to the Internet, conduct data and query searches, and play video and sound clips. Computers also are being used to run presentation software programs giving impressive effects to what were once plain overhead transparencies. (See also, “Computer-Based Resources.”)

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be set up to function unattended• Can be temporary or permanent• Uses cutting edge technology that interests a wide variety of audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be expensive• Equipment may be fragile, increasing the risk for damage• Setup may limit number of viewers or users at a given time

Videos—Displaying information on video can combine powerful visual images with a memorable message. You can set up a permanent station with a continuous loop video. Using a video exhibit is an effective way to supplement a speech or a display booth. Impressive before and after scenes from a cleanup combined with a script that talks about program goals and accomplishments can make a lasting impression. (See also, “Videos” Tool and Resource.)

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Powerful visual effects• Creates a professional image• Portability and reusability can balance cost• Gives audience feeling of “real-life” activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most effective when professionally produced• Can be very expensive• May become outdated quickly, depending on subject

Display Booths—A display booth is often a professionally created, three-dimensional setup used at conferences or conventions. The booth usually provides the framework or backdrop for displays that can be updated and changed depending on the situation. For example, the components of the display can be backed with Velcro and arranged or rotated to create different messages. Whether you use a tabletop “pop up,” basic backdrop, or elaborate floor model, try to keep the display versatile enough to be re-used for multiple purposes.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a very professional image• Attractive to audiences• Can be reused and easily updated• Disassembles for easy transport• Can incorporate other types of exhibits, as described above	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be expensive to create• May not be suitable if left unattended

ATTACHMENT 2: Exhibit Topics & Techniques

TOPIC	TECHNIQUE			
	e Best option	● Good option		
	Poster	Computer Kiosk	Video	Booth
Announcements for meetings or events	e			
Periodic updates on site activities	e	●		
A pictorial history of the site's cleanup	e	●	●	e
Contact information for the EPA site personnel	e			●
Overview of technical topics such as cleanup technologies or site contaminants	e	●	e	●
An introduction to the Superfund program	e	●	e	e
Information on how to get involved in site-related decisions	e		●	●
Reports on site-specific accomplishments such as reaching a milestone	e			●
Database searches (GIS, WasteLAN)		e		
Superfund facts quiz		e		●
Superfund Internet homepage searches		e		●
Simulation of cleanup technologies		e	●	
E-mail questions to EPA staff about site		e		
Scenes from a site that is too difficult to visit		●	e	●
Scenes showing positive cleanup results, such as the creation of a wildlife preserve	●	●	e	●
Pre-recorded inspirational speeches		●	e	
Themes such as Superfund's role in protecting human health and the environment	e	●	e	e
Highlights of Superfund program accomplishments	e	●	●	e
Working models of clean-up technologies or protective gear				e